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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/542,154

12/16/2005

Jozef Peter Paul Huijsmans

TS1268 US

2824

23632 7590 07/10/2009

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EXAMINER

MOHADDES, LADAN

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1795

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

07/10/2009

PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

<b>Office Action Summary</b>	<b>Application No.</b> 10/542,154	<b>Applicant(s)</b> HUIJSMANS ET AL.	
	<b>Examiner</b> LADAN MOHADDES	<b>Art Unit</b> 1795	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 December 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**.                      2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-16 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-16 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All    b) ☐ Some \*    c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)            | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)           |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)   | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____                                      |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>07/12/2005</u> .  | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____                          |

**DETAILED ACTION**

***Priority***

1. Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

2. Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The claim is missing at least a sentence after "wherein the" and therefore it is unclear what the claimed subject matter is.

3. The term "substantially" in claims 14 and 16 is a relative term which renders the claim indefinite. The term "substantially" is not defined by the claim, the specification does not provide a standard for ascertaining the requisite degree, and one of ordinary skill in the art would not be reasonably apprised of the scope of the invention. For the purpose of compact prosecution, the examiner has taken the position to interpret pure oxygen can contain traces of nitrogen and other gases which are present in the different oxygen gas grades available in the market.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

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(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148

USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining

obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

6. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

7. Claims 1-16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Farooque (US Patent 4,917,971, already of record) in view of Hildebrandt et al. (US Patent 5,175,061, hereafter referred to as Hildebrandt, already of record) in further view of Kahara et al. (US Patent 4,810,595, hereafter referred to as Kahara).

Regarding claims 1, 4, 7, 12-14 and 16, Farooque discloses a process for the generation of electricity (Fig. 3) and the production of concentrated carbon dioxide (col

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4, ln 17-26, and ln 62-65) by using a molten carbonate fuel cell (col 2, ln 64-65), the fuel cell comprising an electrolyte, an anode and a cathode, an anode chamber and a cathode chamber (col 2, ln 6 to col 3, ln 11), wherein the process comprises: feeding a fuel gas to the anode chamber (col 3, ln 12-13) and a cathode inlet gas comprising carbon dioxide and molecular oxygen to the cathode chamber (col 4, ln 22-26); producing electricity (Fig. 3), an anode off-gas (Fig. 5, **56**) and a cathode off-gas (Fig. 5, **61**) via anode and cathode reactions (col 3, ln 12-18); wherein part of the anode off-gas is fed to a catalytic afterburner (Fig. 5, **67**) wherein it is oxidized with an oxidant (Fig. 5, **68**); and the remainder of the anode off-gas is recycled to the anode chamber (as applied to claims 1 and 4) (Fig. 5, **65** and **51a**); wherein the cathode off-gas goes through a heat exchanger (Fig. 5, **59**) and is mixed with external oxidant (Fig. 5, **62**) and the mixture and anode off-gas (Fig. 5, **63** and **69**) are fed to cathode through a cooling (heat exchange) assembly (Fig. 3, **32** and col 5, ln 68 to col 6, ln 1).

Farooque does not expressly disclose that the oxidant stream comprises at most 20% (v/v) nitrogen. In the same field of endeavor, Hildebrandt teaches a high temperature fuel cell for production of electricity and CO<sub>2</sub> wherein the oxidant comprises 99.5% oxygen and only 0.1% nitrogen (as applied to claims 1, 7, 12-14 and 16), for the benefit of a) avoiding cathode cover up by nitrogen which decreases CO<sub>2</sub> conversion and reduces the efficiency of the fuel cell; b) preventing dilution of CO<sub>2</sub> and oxygen mixture by nitrogen; and c) eliminating the need for nitrogen removal and hence large waste gas stream (col 1, ln 35-52). Therefore, it would have been obvious for the

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person of ordinary skills in the art at the time the invention was made to use oxygen enriched gas with low amount of nitrogen as oxidant.

In addition, Farooque does not expressly disclose a control mechanism to withdraw anode off gas when CO<sub>2</sub> is reached a set point concentration in cathode chamber. However, controlling the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> and other fuel cell gases by cutting of the supply is well known in the art and thought by Kahara (claims 5 and 6) for the benefit of improving the life and performance of the fuel cell and its stability (Abstract, and col 2, ln 30-31). Therefore, it would have been obvious for the person of ordinary skills in the art at the time the invention was made to incorporate CO<sub>2</sub> control mechanism in the fuel cell for its improved performance and stability.

Regarding claim 2, Farooque discloses that anode off-gas further passes through a heat exchanger (Fig. 5, **52**) to separate water from carbon dioxide stream (col 5, ln 35-36).

Regarding claims 3 and 5, Farooque discloses that the fuel gas is hydrocarbon gas such as methane (col 3, ln 6) and is converted to hydrogen and carbon monoxide in anode chamber (Fig. 1, 3, col 3, ln 14 and col 5, ln 12).

Regarding claim 6, Farooque discloses that the fuel gas is a reformer effluent comprising hydrogen and carbon monoxide (col 5, ln 21-23).

Regarding claims 8 and 15, the disclosure of Farooque in view of Hildebrandt and in further view of Kahara does not teach the range of carbon dioxide concentration at the cathode chamber outlet. However, Kahara recognizes the need for CO<sub>2</sub> control mechanism in the fuel cell for its improved performance and stability (claim 5 and 6 and

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abstract). Kahara also teaches that gas feed control systems should be installed in the fuel cell stack for gas shut off (col 9, ln 23-25). Therefore, it would have been within the skill of the ordinary artisan to adjust the CO<sub>2</sub> amount in the cathode outlet in the fuel cell by using the control mechanism taught in Kahara to improve the performance and stability of fuel cell. *Discovery of optimum value of result effective variable in known process is ordinarily within skill of art. In re Boesch*, CCPA 1980, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ215.

Regarding claims 10-11, Farooque in view of Hildebrandt and in further view of Kahara does not expressly disclose the amount of the off-gas recycled to the anode chamber. However Hildebrandt gives an example of amount gas recycled back to anode and CO<sub>2</sub> amount fed back to cathode after water separation (col 3, Table 2). Therefore, it would have been within the skill of the ordinary artisan to adjust the amount of anode off-gas recycled to the anode chamber to be within the range so that optimum amount of H<sub>2</sub> and CO is provided to the anode. *Discovery of optimum value of result effective variable in known process is ordinarily within skill of art. In re Boesch*, CCPA 1980, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ215.

### **Conclusion**

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to LADAN MOHADDES whose telephone number is (571)270-7742. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Thursday from 8:30 AM to 6:00 PM (EST).

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Patrick Ryan can be reached on (571) 272-1292. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/LADAN MOHADDES/  
Examiner, Art Unit 1795

/PATRICK RYAN/  
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 1795